

FROM DANTE TO SAINT CATHERINE

four from each terzo of the city, was appointed, holding office for two months, one of them to serve as Captain of the People and Gonfaloniere of Justice. There was at first a subsidiary council of six nobles, to be known as the Collegio, who were not to reside with the Signoria in the Palazzo, but without whom the Twelve could undertake nothing of importance nor open letters that concerned the State. But at the beginning of June, after the Emperor had passed again through Siena on his return journey, Giovanni di Agnolino Salimbeni (the most weighty in counsel of all the Sienese nobles, and a man most loyal to the Republic, with whose family Catherine was to be so closely associated), himself a member of the College, finding that this arrangement would not work, agreed with the Twelve to summon a general council in the Sala Grande of the Palace, at which the six nobles laid down their office and the College was abolished.¹ The government thus remained entirely in the hands of the Twelve and their adherents, known as the *Dodtcini*, afterwards called the People of the Middle Number. The members of this new Monte (called, by Matteo Villani, of the "minuti mestieri") came from the class of the petty tradesmen and small notaries. It "formed a class intermediate between the order of the Noveschi and the lowest populace, and was composed for the most part of families which had become well-to-do by attending to trade and commerce, during that long period of prosperity that the Republic enjoyed under the oligarchical government of the Nine." ² Their rule, however, proved the most corrupt and incompetent that Siena had ever endured, though they carried on an ultimately successful war against Perugia, and made attempts, partly by money, partly by hiring other mercenaries, to deal with the ever increasing scourge of the foreign companies that at intervals threatened the Sienese contado.

In the meanwhile, at Pisa, an alarm that the Emperor intended to liberate Lucca, and an attempt to reconcile the rival factions of the Raspanti and Bergolini, had led to a popular rising against

¹ *Cronaca Senese*, coll. 148-152.

² Grottanelli, notes to the *Leggenda minori*, p. 190.